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Report of the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities on her visit to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea: comments by the State*

* Reproduced as received.

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1. We once again appreciate the successful visit to the DPRK by the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities, Catalina Devandas-Aguilar, from 3 to 8 May 2017 and kindly request her to attach in her report submitted to the UN Human Rights Council as appendix the following information which may incur misunderstanding due to inadequate explanation or inappropriate interpretation.

2. Paragraph 7 states "the State is the owner of all land and productive assets." It is not correct. The article 7 of the Socialist Constitution of the DPRK stipulates that "Land, farm machines, ships as well as small and medium-size factories and enterprises may be owned by social, cooperative organizations."

3. Paragraph 13 states "denial of freedom of movement within the country disproportionally affects persons with disabilities who may be in urgent need of accessing healthcare and other specialized services." It does not correctly reflect the reality on the ground. In fact, the strict regulation including the requirement of advance travel clearance is just a procedure to confirm that the people moving in the country possess necessary identification certificate under the peculiar situation of the country's division where the hostile forces continue to engage in destructive sabotage plots of all kinds. Therefore, it does not affect at all the freedom of movement and, in particular, the persons with disabilities who may be in urgent need of accessing healthcare and other specialized services.

4. Paragraph 31 states "the Special Rapporteur recommended to consider including the Ministry of City Management and the Ministry of State Construction Control as members of the Central Committee." It is an incorrect information. Prior to her visit, majority of the Ministries including the Ministry of Light Industry and the Ministry of Sports in addition to those Ministries afore-mentioned in the report became members of the Central Committee."

5. Paragraph 40 states "persons with disabilities with no opportunities to work are looked down because they are not considered to be productive members of society." It represents the distortion of the reality because

(a) It is the consistent policy of the DPRK Government to take warm care of the persons with disabilities and provide them with necessary working and living conditions. Article 72 of the Socialist Constitution of the DPRK stipulates that "all persons who are no longer able to work because of old age, illness or a physical disability, the old and children who have no means of support are all entitled to material assistance." Article 72 states that "The State shall promote edification in the public so that people may keep noble humanity and offer kindly treatment and active help to the people with disabilities without any discrimination."

(b) The State provides the people with disabilities with appropriate jobs and working conditions including through establishment of specialized enterprises in consideration of their wishes and abilities. It also undertakes social awareness-raising activities by introducing and disseminating sports tournaments, art performance and working life of the people with disabilities through TV and other mass media so that the general public know their abilities and contributions made to the State and social development and take proper attitudes towards them.

(c) The People's Committees at all levels and other relevant organs pay deep attention to providing the people with disabilities with living conditions, and thus establish social trait to actively help them.

6. Paragraph 57 states "the curriculum taught in the special schools for the deaf and the blind differs to that applied in regular schools, with more emphasis on vocational training." It also differs from the reality. After ratifying the Convention on the Rights of the Persons with Disabilities in 2016, the DPRK amended its Law on the Protection of the People with Disabilities to stipulate in Article 20 that "The educational leadership body and the institutions concerned shall plan a proper curriculum of the special schools along the line of giving priority to the general secondary education and combining it with practice." Accordingly, the curriculum of the special schools are updated and executed to include the subjects of the general schools for the students with disabilities in conformity with the curriculum of the 12-year compulsory education from 2015. The same paragraph which

states that "students learn primarily vocational skills such as massage therapy, music and arts, agriculture, or handicrafts, which prevents them from entering tertiary education." is a gross misunderstanding. In addition to teaching the same subjects for the students in the special schools as in the general education system, vocational education has been given from the past according to the demand of the students with disabilities and their parents. As such, it is not forcibly imposed on them. The students may not learn this vocational technique according to their choice and can advance to diverse vocational schools or colleges according to their wish.

7. Paragraph 58 states "the majority of children with disabilities in the DPRK, including those with multiple, intellectual or developmental disabilities, fall outside the school system altogether." It is not a correct expression. Majority of children and students with disabilities in the DPRK are all studying in the existing education system. Only missing are the statistics about the children and students who study in the schools except the special schools. Therefore, it would be correct to state that "The majority of pre-school children with severe disabilities in the DPRK, including those with multiple, intellectual or developmental disabilities, fall outside this Rehabilitation Centre for Children with Disabilities."

8. Paragraph 60 which states "those who successfully graduate from college can take an exam to be admitted to university." is not a proper explanation. In the educational system of the DPRK the students with disabilities after graduating from the college can either receive more education through specialized vocational training in the field of light industry or advance to the factory colleges or forestry colleges through distant learning education.

9. Paragraph 72 states "worrisome reports of forced abortion and forced sterilization of women with disabilities, and that infanticide is sometimes practiced after the birth of a child with disabilities." This is totally groundless fabrication. In the DPRK forced abortion and forced sterilization of women with disabilities are never allowed as they constitute grave crimes. Therefore, it is fabricated information cooked up by the hostile forces and the "defectors" who betrayed their motherland to run away, in their attempt to defame the image of the DPRK.

10. Paragraph 74 states "all little persons are registered and receive special attention, including trials and research to identify treatments to increase their height." This is a misinterpretation. In the DPRK health cards are made for all children to register their physical specifications including height, weight, disease and etc., to promote their development and take measures to treat disease. However, there are no such practices as medication, trials and research to forcibly increase the height of the little people by nature.

11. Paragraph 79 states "in the area of work, out of some 1200 workshops or light factories for persons with disabilities that were built in the 1950s, the majority are reportedly no longer operational, due to lack of equipment and raw materials to produce goods." This is another misleading interpretation of the reality. The light workshops and factories have been organized since 1950s and are still built now. The light workshops and light factories that rely on local raw materials and require handicraft manufacturing are normally operational as ever.